



# Educate to Liberate

“Essential service” is a technical term in labour relations and in the SA Constitution, whereby a designated type of worker can be forbidden by law from striking. When, in early 2013, the Secretary-General of the ANC proposed that education be made an “essential service”, this was immediately, loudly and very successfully opposed by the teachers’ union, SADTU.

The matter ended with the unequivocal statement by the President of the ANC and the Republic, Jacob Zuma, as part of the 2013 State of the Nation Address, that teaching would not be made an “essential service” in this sense, and that teachers would continue to have the same rights as other workers, including the right to strike.

The communist party, the SACP, had used the occasion to issue a press release that said that debating the loaded phrase “essential service” was a waste of time for all, but that there is a necessary debate to be had about the nature and purpose of education. The SACP statement says:

*“The SACP is further of the view that we should not just provide an education that produces readily made goods for absorption by the labour market but that our education, an education that must be essential, must be underpinned by the vision of **People’s Education for People’s Power!** This vision requires that our schooling and post schooling education systems do not just produce skilled individuals but individuals who are able to interpret and make sense of their political, ideological and socio-economic conditions and thus be actors to radically alter those conditions.”*

One month earlier, the well-respected educationalist Michael Rice, in an article prominently published by the Johannesburg newspaper, The Star, used the occasion of the announcement of the Matric examination results to argue:

*“Our obsession with exam results has devalued education to little more than a means of obtaining a certificate to gain entrance to some sort of professional training or a job. The cultivation of values, critical thought, cultural sensitivity and the wide spectrum of opportunities for personal, intellectual and moral development have become irrelevant in the pursuit of marks.”*

***“What is needed is a complete revisioning of education; what it is, what it is meant for, who it is meant to serve and how, and how to assess its worth. The abolition of the present public exam system would***

*go a long way to making such a paradigm shift possible.”*

Later on, Dr Rice says:

*“Sticking with the present system is not an option.”*

These two documents, the SACP press release and Dr Rice’s article from the Star, are reproduced in full in the attached file. Like the preceding item (the article by Prof Jeff Guy) these documents stand as evidence that that leading forces in society recognise that the very nature of education is currently at issue.

In the same State of the Nation Address of 14 February, 2013, President Zuma also said:

*“We welcome the improvement each year in the ANA results, but more must be done to improve maths, science and technology.*

*“The Department of Basic Education will establish a national task team to strengthen the implementation of the Mathematics, Science and Technology Strategy.”*

Dr Rice points out:

*“Our present system was created to meets the needs of the first industrial revolution in the 19th century. It is demonstrably failing to meet the needs of the 21st*

*century... Mass public education was first introduced in Prussia and later the rest of Europe to meet the needs of industrial competitiveness.”*

In fact, mass public education has historically been a bourgeois, capitalist policy, designed to cheapen the cost, and therefore the market price, of commodity labour power. As much as you may think that you are getting educated for higher wages, in the scheme of the bourgeoisie, the intention is to lower your wages.

Whenever the mass education system tends towards what N F S Grundtvig called “education for life”, the collective bourgeoisie becomes restless and begins to agitate.

The bourgeois agitation for science is not for true science, which is a humanity and which is inseparable from philosophy. Their agitation for technology is narrow. Their agitation for mathematics is for “mathematics literacy” (“Maths Lit.”), which is intended to remove all intellectual content and leave only the barest and most impoverished kind of utility.

These measures are a reversion to something akin to the “Bantu Education” of old.

Above all, the South African bourgeoisie wants history taken out of schools, and politics taken out of the heads and out of the mouths of school teachers. Our purpose

in this course is to frustrate that bourgeoisie, to restore history, to revive People's Education for People's Power, and bring back Education for Liberation from the Philistine, anti-human bourgeoisie.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Educate to Liberate – SACP; Abolish Matric - Dr Michael Rice; 2013.](#)
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